

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics
Stanford University School of Medicine
Stanford, California

Dear Dr. Lederberg:

Your memorandum of October 5, 1964 proposing an approach to "an interdisciplinary program of developing substitutes for faltering hearts" has been reviewed with great interest here at The White House.

Unquestionably a conference of the sort you describe will be a valuable step in furthering this program. And President Johnson's interest in and encouragement of such activity is already manifest by his sponsorship and endorsement of many related activities in this field. Aside from its fundamental public health aspects, this program has the virtue that it involves other elements of national interest as well. It is particularly appropriate for Presidential interest -- as a prototype program of cooperation between science, industry and government; it has potential for demonstrating conversion of defense technology and resources to civilian and commercial applications; and the host of other social and human welfare considerations which will naturally stem from a massive national scientific attack on a major worldwide medical problem have policy implications of major dimension.

We regret that the busy schedule of the Presidential visits to California in the immediate period ahead would not permit the President to attend such a conference. In any event, as you indicated, the timing of the conference need not be determined primarily on the basis that this particular occasion would be the only means by which the President might give his public encouragement to this effort. I am sure that there will arise a number of suitable occasions in the future.

Accordingly, assured of Presidential interest, I hope that you and your colleagues will proceed to develop this exciting program and you can be assured of the support of federal agencies in this regard.

Sincerely yours,

Douglass Cater
Assistant to the President